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ABSTRACT

American Indians have the unique challenge of living and thriving in two distinct, cultural environments: their Native environment, and the White (i.e. mainstream) environment. They learn to identify with two cultures, and this duality of identification demonstrates their bicultural ethnic identity. As adolescence is typically a time of serious identity searching, American Indian adolescents must especially struggle developing their bicultural identity, which makes this population crucial to examine. This study examined the bicultural ethnic identity of adolescents of a Northeastern American Indian tribe. Participants were found to have a significantly higher level of tribal identity than non-tribal identity. Additionally, tribal identity and non-tribal identity were positively correlated with the number of activities (tribal and non-tribal, respectively) the adolescents engaged in. Interestingly, self-esteem was not related to ethnic identity. Results will be discussed in terms of practical use in understanding and further examining American Indian adolescent identity development. Two appendixes contain tribal and non-tribal identity scales. (Contains 21 references and 1 table.) (Author)

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Examining the Bicultural Ethnic Identify of American Indian Adolescents

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Abstract

American Indians have the unique challenge of living and thriving in two distinct, cultural environments: their Native environment, and the White (i.e. mainstream) environment. They learn to identify with two cultures, and this duality of identification demonstrates their bicultural ethnic identity (Moran & Fleming, 1999). As adolescence is typically a time of serious identity searching (Erikson, 1968), American Indian adolescents must especially struggle developing their bicultural identity, which makes this population crucial to examine. This study examined the bicultural ethnic identity of adolescents of a Northeastern American Indian tribe. Participants were found to have a significantly higher level of tribal identity than non-tribal identity. Additionally, tribal identity and non-tribal identity were positively correlated with the number of activities (tribal and non-tribal, respectively) the adolescents engaged in. Interestingly, self-esteem was not related to ethnic identity. Results will be discussed in terms of practical use in understanding and further examining American Indian adolescent identity development.

Measuring the Bicultural Ethnic Identity of American Indian Adolescents

American Indians can be considered "bicultural," because they must adapt to two cultures: their Native culture and the White, or mainstream, culture (Moran & Fleming, 1999). Most of the research on the ethnic identity of American Indian adolescents has focused exclusively on tribal identity, disregarding non-tribal identity. Also, previous research has been based upon samples of adolescents who live on tribal reservations, neglecting those who live off reservations or belong to tribes without residential reservation land (Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Moran & Fleming, 1999). However, it is important to study adolescents' non-tribal identity and those not living on reservations. The purpose of this study was to modify two existing measures of ethnic identity in order to examine the bicultural ethnic identity of American Indian adolescents (ages 13-17) of a Northeastern tribe without residential reservation land.

Defining Ethnic Identity

Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980) argued that identity formation develops through a process of exploration and commitment that typically begins during adolescence, and Phinney (1992) stresses the importance of ethnic identity during adolescence as an aspect of overall identity achievement. Others have asserted that the extent to which an adolescent conforms to the prescribed behaviors of his/her culture depends on the strength of his/her cultural identity and level of identification with the culture (Oetting, Swaim & Chiarella, 1998). Since ethnicity (family heritage) is not necessarily the same as ethnic identity (conscious identification with a given ethnic group) (Phinney, 1992), a theoretical framework for defining ethnic identity must first be established.

Ethnic identity has been defined several different ways. However, a review of seventy studies of ethnic identity among adolescents and adults reported that about two-thirds of the

articles failed to provide a specific definition (Phinney, 1990). Moran and Fleming (1999) described ethnic identity as a person's perception of his/her strength of connection to an ethnic group, outlining three parts: (a) sharing a common history and culture, (b) people in group possibly identifiable by similar physical characteristics, and (c) people in group identify themselves as a group through interaction and establishment of boundaries with others. Phinney (1992) views ethnic identity as having four components: self-identification and ethnicity, ethnic behaviors and practices, affirmation and belonging, and ethnic identity achievement.

More recently, ethnic identity has been classified as a two-part phenomenon of (a) identification (i.e. a sense of belonging and pride in one's ethnic group), and (b) exploration (i.e. one's search for identity in his/her ethnic group and participating in the group's practices) (Spencer, Icard, Harachi, Catalano & Oxford, 2000). This two-part theory is beneficial, as it recognizes the duality of ethnic identity. This is similar to Marcia's (1980) dimensions of exploration (i.e. "crisis") and commitment (i.e. conscious decision to accept a particular role or identity) (also see Erikson, 1968). The two-part theory also shares in common the major aspects of the former theories in that it addresses an individual's overt participation/activities and his/her active identification with a given culture or ethnic group. Therefore, Spencer et al.'s (2000) conception of ethnic identity was utilized as a theoretical framework for the current study.

As adolescents attempt to define their sense of self, their ethnic background is often an important part of the identification process. Many adolescents, in an effort to establish an identity for themselves, may have contemplated their ethnic group membership(s), hoping to understand the meaning and relativity of their ethnic group(s) (Martinez & Dukes, 1997). During adolescence, racial and ethnic attitudes tend to shift from learning ethnic labels (seen in childhood) to understanding the importance and relativity of group membership (Spencer et al,

2000). This exploration process could result in a positive outcome, strengthening adolescents' ethnic identity and self-esteem through a connection to a given ethnic group with qualities or a history that they identify with and admire. However, if adolescents encounter negative stereotypes concerning their ethnic group(s), they could internalize them, resulting in shame or a drop in self-esteem. American Indian adolescents face several unique challenges as they attempt to identify themselves, encountering a high prevalence of alcoholism and poverty associated with their ethnic group; such factors may make their search for identification longer and more difficult (Lysne & Levy, 1997). To feel as part of a group alone is not sufficient to guarantee a sense of belonging or identity that results in psychological well-being.

Measuring Ethnic Identity

Phinney (1992) indicated that numerous measures of ethnic identity have been developed as attempts to measure specific ethnic groups. As a result, most studies of different ethnic groups cannot be validly compared, and generalization of any single study's results to other ethnic groups is not possible. To address this psychometric issue, Phinney (1992) developed the Multigroup Measure of Ethnic Identity (MEIM). The MEIM is a 14-item measure with a four-point scale (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree), which examines three aspects of ethnic identity: positive attitudes and sense of belonging (five items); ethnic identity achievement, including exploration and resolution of identity issues (seven items); and ethnic behaviors or practices (two items). The measure also includes six items assessing participants' attitudes towards other ethnic groups, besides their own.

Phinney (1992) administered the MEIM to 417 students from an urban high school and 136 students from an urban college. Both high school and college participants were from various ethnic backgrounds. Participants were also administered the Rosenberg (1986) Self-Esteem

Inventory. College students were found to score higher on ethnic identity achievement than the high school students, possibly because identity achievement often develops with age (as Phinney asserts). Compared to other ethnic groups, White students (both high school and college) scored low in ethnic identity. For the minority groups (both high school and college), ethnic identity demonstrated a positive, statistically significant correlation with self-esteem, but not for White college students. There was only one American Indian in this study, so utilizing an adaptation of the MEIM specifically for American Indians is a new approach.

As Phinney states in other work (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992), an individual's community setting has an important impact on ethnic identity, with the opportunity to participate in ethnic activities (festivals, dance, foods, etc.) potentially enhancing ethnic belonging and attitudes. Phinney's (1992) MEIM attempts to address the importance of involvement in social activities with members of one's group and participation in cultural activities, but this is only examined through four exploration items (e.g., "I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs"), not allowing participants to share specifically how many and what kinds of activities they are involved in. This may be difficult, as the MEIM is targeted toward examining several ethnic groups. The present study allowed participants to report participation in tribal activities and non-tribal activities through a checklist, also permitting participants report any other activities not included in the list.

Phinney's (1992) MEIM has been utilized in numerous studies of ethnic identity specifically focusing on adolescents (e.g., Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Mcdonough, 2000; Spencer et. al, 2000). In one specific study, Roberts and Phinney (1999) administered the MEIM to 5,423 6th, 7th, and 8th graders from various ethnic backgrounds in the Houston Metropolitan area. The researchers also added six corollary measurements to the survey: self-esteem, coping, optimism,

mastery, loneliness, and depression. The researchers found that the MEIM scores were associated positively with self-esteem, coping, sense of mastery, and optimism across all ethnic groups. Loneliness and depression were negatively correlated with MEIM scores across all ethnic groups. The results of the study add to the existing literature on ethnic identity by providing evidence that ethnic identity: (a) is a sound construct with young adolescents, (b) has an identifiable structure that surfaces during early adolescence, (c) is often positively related to self-esteem, and (d) can be measured reliably across groups. American Indian was not identified as one of the ethnic groups in this study.

Worrell (2000) examined the validity of scores on the MEIM in a group of 275 academically talented adolescents (ages 10 to 18) attending an ethnically diverse summer enrichment program in the San Francisco Bay Area. Worrell concluded that Phinney's two factors, ethnic identity and other group orientation, had reliability coefficients of .89 and .76, respectively, asserting the reliability of the MEIM's factor structure. However, Worrell asserts that complete acceptance of the MEIM is premature, and would benefit from work on its psychometric soundness. This study extends Phinney's (1992) results to individuals in early adolescence, suggesting that ethnic identity measured by the MEIM is stable through adolescent years.

While the MEIM (Phinney, 1992) was developed for inter-ethnic group comparison, it does not encourage subjects to select affiliation with multiple ethnic categories, neglecting the reality that many people identify with more than one ethnic group. Along with the MEIM, most previous research has allowed only one ethnic (or racial) category selection for each subject (Moran & Fleming, 1999). Spencer et al. (2000) recognize this weakness (and two others) in previous studies of ethnic identity, stating that they (a) have not recognized the distinctively

differing identity processes multiracial individuals experience, (b) have not provided the opportunity for individuals to report membership in more than one racial or ethnic group, or (c) have not had large enough samples for statistically meaningful subgroup analyses. Moran and Fleming (1999) also argue that most studies of ethnic identity ignore the variability in the ethnic background of many people, particularly American Indians (also see Collier, 1998).

Fortunately, the United States Census accounted for the ethnic variability of its population in the 2000 Census, allowing respondents to identify for the first time with more than racial category. Specifically among American Indians, high rates of intertribal and interracial marriages have resulted in many Indian people affiliating with more than one tribe and/or being of mixed blood lineage (Hirschfelder & Montano, 1993). Gonzalez, Houston, and Chen (1994) address the need to represent the heterogeneity and within-group differences among members of ethnic groups. Assessing individuals' multi-dimensional background (racial or ethnic) would appear to be critical in understanding identity development. Therefore, this issue was addressed in the current study, as participants were encouraged to report any and all ethnicities.

Bicultural Ethnic Identity

The orthogonal cultural identification theory (Oetting et al., 1998) specifies that an individual's identification with one culture can be independent of his/her identification with another culture. An individual may identify equally with more than one cultural (e.g., ethnic) group, or may only identify with one of the several cultural groups to which the individual belongs. Moran and Fleming (1999) state that measuring bicultural ethnic identity among American Indians is very difficult because of the "existence of multiple tribes, distinct cultural areas, different languages, degree of Indian blood lineage, intertribal and interracial marriages, and the experience of living in two worlds," (pg. 9).

Moran and Fleming (1999) built upon an existing measure of bicultural ethnic identity (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991) and administered the scale to 1,592 high school participants in four Indian reservation communities. The participants were measured on four subscales: bicultural ethnic identity, social competencies, personal mastery, and self-esteem. There were also eight Indian-related statements and six White-related statements on a four-point Likert scale (i.e. "My family is a success in the Indian way of life"; "I will be involved in White traditions as an adult"). The Indian and White scales had reliable coefficients of .91 and .92, respectively. Participants' were found to have significantly equal levels of identification with Indian and White cultures, with a mean Indian score of 3.04 (SD=.72), and a mean White score of 2.55 (SD=.90). Furthermore, the lowest scores obtained on the four measures of psychological well-being were found for subjects with low identity with both Indian and White cultures. Moderate levels of well-being were found for those with high identity on only Indian or only White measures. The highest scores on well-being were reported by subjects with high identity on both Indian and White measures. Therefore, these results indicate that identifying strongly with more than one culture is related to higher levels of self-esteem for these adolescents. The present study adapted Moran and Fleming's (1999) bicultural ethnic identity scale; their research supports the present study's expectations that participants would have matching moderate/high levels of tribal and non-tribal identity, and that self-esteem would be positively correlated with bicultural ethnic identity.

On the whole, previous measures of ethnic identity among American Indian adolescents have had inconsistent results. Lysne and Levy (1997) found that American Indian adolescents who attended high school on a reservation had a greater sense of ethnic identity than those who attended an off-reservation high school. Spencer et. al. (2000) concluded that most adolescent

participants from monoracial or multiracial backgrounds scored similarly on overall ethnic identity (utilizing Phinney's (1992) MEIM), while Martinez and Dukes (1997) found that White and American Indian adolescents had the lowest ethnic identity of all ethnic groups they measured (also utilizing the MEIM). More research needs to be conducted to account for bicultural backgrounds and the connection of adolescents to their American Indian heritage (e.g., not living on a reservation, participation in tribal activities).

Present Research

Based on previous research of American Indian adolescents' ethnic identity, it is clear that several issues need to be addressed. First, adolescents' freedom to share possible multiple ethnic backgrounds should be addressed. Second, bicultural ethnic identity needs to be assessed, with both tribal and non-tribal identities measured independently of one another. Third, the relationship of adolescents' tribal and non-tribal identities with self-esteem should be examined to determine whether some of the negative stereotypes of American Indian culture could have adversely affected psychological well-being. Finally, while the exploration of one's ethnic identity (through participating in cultural activities) is an important component to most theories of identity, most research has not directly measured people's participation in specific activities or cultural practices. Therefore, participation in cultural activities should be examined.

In order to address these issues, the present study examined a Northeast American Indian tribe's adolescents' (ages 13-17) (a) bicultural ethnic identity by adapting Phinney's (1992) MEIM and Moran and Fleming's (1999) bicultural ethnic identity scale, (b) self-esteem (utilizing Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem Scale), and (c) participation in tribal and non-tribal activities. It was predicted that (a) participants would have matching moderate/high levels of tribal and non-tribal identity, (b) participants' self-esteem would be positively correlated with bicultural ethnic

identity, and (c) participants' tribal and non-tribal identities (on the exploration sub-scale) would be positively correlated with their participation in tribal and non-tribal activities, respectively.

Methods

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited from the total enrolled, nationwide population of 153 adolescents, ages 13 to 17, of a Northeastern American Indian tribe.[1] This group was identified through the records of the tribe's Enrollment Department. Eighty-six of the adolescents were located in the tribe's home state, and sixty-seven outside of the home state. There are about 1,600 total enrolled members of this specific tribe, with about 900 located in the tribe's home state and 700 located out of state. The tribe owns various reservation lands, some of which hold the tribe's casino. The researchers were granted permission by the tribe's Council of Elders to conduct the study.

Thirty participants (21 females, 9 males) returned the survey (19.6% return rate). Participants' average age was 15.57 years (SD = 1.30), with eleven participants residing in the tribe's home state and nine residing out of state. Participants primarily reported "Caucasian" as their other ethnic background (96.7%), and five participants reported another ethnic background as well (Hispanic, Jewish, Ukranian, or other American Indian tribal ethnicity).

Measures

Ethnic identity scales. The tribal and non-tribal identity scales were adaptations of Phinney's (1992) MEIM and Moran and Fleming's (2000) bicultural ethnic identity scale. The tribal identity scale (see Appendix A) consisted of ten statements, reflecting Spencer et. al.'s (2000) two-part phenomenon of ethnic identity of identification and exploration. Five of the statements refer to ethnic identification (e.g., "I feel a strong attachment towards my (tribe's

name[2]) background"), while the other five refer to ethnic exploration (e.g., "I am interested in learning more about my (tribe's name) culture"). The non-tribal identity scale (see Appendix B) parallels the questions from the tribal scale. For the non-tribal identity scale, "non-tribal" was explained to participants as the ethnicity/ethnicities they identify with other than tribal. The participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Higher scores reflect a higher level of identity.

Tribal and extracurricular activities. In order to more formally assess identity exploration, a list of tribal and non-tribal activities was created to assess the adolescents' level of involvement in tribal (e.g., pow-wows, tribal crafts) and non-tribal (e.g., sports teams, clubs) activities. Participants were asked to check off all activities they have participated in; they could also indicate any other activities not included in the checklist. The list was created by the researchers, basing the tribal activity items on research of what the tribe offers to its adolescent members, and the non-tribal activity items on a general knowledge of what schools and communities typically offer adolescents.

Self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is a global measure of self-esteem. It consists of 10 statements on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree to 4=strongly disagree). Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-esteem. Versions of Rosenberg's scale were utilized in three ethnic identity studies previously discussed (Phinney (1992), Moran & Fleming (1999), and Roberts & Phinney (1999)).

Open-ended questions. In order to allow for more elaboration on participants' sense of tribal identity, four open-ended questions were placed at the end of the survey. Participants were

asked about the relevance of their tribal identity and were encouraged to share anything they like or dislike about being a member of the tribe.

Procedure

The survey was mailed to the parents/guardians of all potential participants. A letter detailing the study was addressed to the parent/guardian, and a second letter addressed to the adolescent. After the participants answered a series of demographic questions, they then completed the two identity scales, the self-esteem scale, the tribal and extracurricular activities checklist, and the open-ended questions. Participants returned the survey upon completion in a stamped envelope provided with the survey. A follow-up reminder postcard was sent out after seven weeks.

Upon completion of the research, an outline of the results was mailed to all 153 adolescents and parents/guardians. The results were presented to the Tribal Council, Council of Elders, and tribal members in an open meeting. The research was also discussed in an issue of the tribe's weekly newsletter.

Results

Scale Reliabilities

In order to confirm scale reliabilities, Cronbach's alphas were calculated for each of the scales. The standardized alphas were as follows: tribal identity scale (.81), tribal identification subscale (.71), tribal exploration subscale (.79), non-tribal identity scale (.78), non-tribal identification subscale (.68), non-tribal exploration subscale (.48), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) (.89).

Hypothesis Testing

In order to test the prediction that the adolescents would have equivalent levels of tribal and non-tribal identity, a dependent-samples t-test was conducted with the tribal and non-tribal identity scales. Tribal identity (M=3.71, SD=.65) was found to be significantly higher than non-tribal identity (M=3.33, SD=.65) ($t(28)=2.12$, $p=.043$).

Testing the hypothesis that participants' bicultural ethnic identity (tribal identity and non-tribal identity) would be positively correlated with self-esteem, Pearson's product-moment correlations were run with the tribal and non-tribal identity scales and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). There was no significant relationship between either identity scale and self-esteem.

Since exploration is a key dimension to identity, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was conducted to test the prediction that participants' tribal and non-tribal identity (on the exploration subscale) would be positively correlated with the number of tribal and non-tribal activities engaged in, respectively. Two significant relationships were found: tribal identity exploration and tribal activities were positively correlated ($r(29)=.48$, $p=.01$), and non-tribal identity exploration and non-tribal activities were also positively correlated ($r(28)=.39$, $p=.05$) (see Table 1 for percentages and frequencies).

Supplemental Analyses

A series of supplemental analyses were run to observe the data more closely. This tribe is based in a specific Northeast state, and since identity can be experienced contextually (i.e. who we are and how we express ourselves is impacted by a given social context) (Collier & Thomas, 1988; Brown & Levinson, 1978), it is possible that adolescents residing in the tribal state have a stronger tribal identity than adolescents living in other states. To test this, an independent-

samples t-test was conducted with participants' residence (tribal state vs. other U.S. states) and the tribal identity scale. Participants from the tribe's state were found to have a significantly higher tribal identity (M=4.06, SD=.61, n=11) than participants in other states (M=3.51, SD=.58, n=19) (t(28)=2.47, p=.02), and within tribal identity, a higher degree on the exploration subscale (M=3.80, SD=.92; M=3.22, SD=.62, respectively) (t(28)=2.08, p=.047); there was no significant difference on the identification subscales. In addition, participants living outside the tribal state were not found to have a higher non-tribal identity than participants living in the tribal state.

Since geographical location may additionally affect participation in cultural activities, an independent samples t-test was conducted with participants' residence (tribal state and other U.S. states) as the predictor variable and number of activities (tribal and non-tribal as the dependent variables. Participants in the tribal state were found to participate in more tribal activities (M=2.18, SD=1.17) than participants from other states (M=.79, SD=1.40) (t(28)=2.78, p=.01). Furthermore, participants living outside the tribal state reported participating in more non-tribal activities (M=3.79, SD=2.10) than participants in the tribal state (M=1.73, SD=1.85) (t(28)=2.71, p=.01).

Participants' responses to the open ended questions were examined. Thirteen percent (n = 4) of the participants noted their sense of pride in their tribal background, and thirty-six percent (n =11) stated that there is nothing that they do no like about being a member of the tribe. Thirty-six percent (n = 11) of the participants shared that they enjoy being a member of the tribe, mentioning the importance of culture, heritage, and/or traditions. Sixty-three percent (n = 19) of the participants mentioned their feelings of belonging and/or identity through being part of a tribe/group. Sixty-three percent (n = 19) of the participants also mentioned appreciating the opportunities, benefits, and economic advantages they receive as members of the tribe. Thirteen

percent (n = 4) of the participants, all from the tribal state, shared their dislike of others' assumptions that they are wealthy because of the tribe's casino (located in the tribe's state). Interestingly, no participants living outside the tribal state mentioned difficulties with stereotypes regarding the tribe's casino and presumed wealth.

Twenty percent (n = 6) of the participants living outside of the tribal state expressed (a) difficulties with living far away from the tribe, (b) wishes to live in the tribal state, (c) unfamiliarity with the tribe, or (d) desires to learn more about their culture. These factors may attribute to the higher return rate among participants located outside the tribal state (28%), as compared to participants located in the tribal state (13%).

Discussion

Several factors may account for the significant difference between the participants' tribal and non-tribal identity. More than one-third of the participants were located in the tribal state and, therefore, may have more access to tribal activities and resources, which may aide to strengthen their tribal identity. Also, the tribe actively keeps all of its members informed and involved (e.g., activities, newsletters), potentially affecting the participants' ability to explore and thus establish their tribal identity. Participants living outside the tribal state were found to have a significantly lower tribal identity than those living in the tribal state, but the difference was found in their ethnic exploration, not identification. This suggests that participants located outside the tribal state may have an equal *identification* toward their tribal background as do participants living in the tribal state, but their overall identity may suffer due to their lack of ability to *explore* their tribal culture. As Collier and Thomas (1988) state, "Cultural identity is dynamic and fluid because it is constituted and rendered in interaction (p.113)." Participants

living in the tribal state may have more opportunities to explore their identity with participation in tribal activities and interaction with other tribal members.

Although some (n=6) of the participants from the tribal state discussed the difficulty of stereotypes regarding perceived wealth, participants from the tribal state were found to have an overall stronger tribal identity than participants outside the tribal state. Participants living in the tribal state may be more familiar with the business, popularity, and media exposure of the casino. Due to their proximity to the casino, these participants potentially encounter stereotyping by others, but interestingly, their tribal identity is stronger than those outside the tribal state. It may be that these stereotypes only serve to heighten their sense of pride, strengthening their desire to identify with their tribe. Phinney (2003) supports this notion, asserting that the experience of discrimination may lead to deeper exploration of one's ethnicity.

The non-tribal exploration subscale has a disappointingly low reliability coefficient (.48), which may be due to the vagueness of "non-tribal" when addressing cultural exploration. Whereas the tribal identity scale is specific with little room for interpretation, we do not know if participants responded to the non-tribal exploration statements with ethnicity in mind. For example, when responding to the statement, "I would enjoy participating in more non-(tribe's name) activities," participants may have focused on non-tribal activities which are not cultural in nature. Furthermore, we are not certain what ethnicity or ethnicities participants are considering when responding to the non-tribal statements. Further research should more closely address this issue.

The greater return rate among participants located outside the tribal state than participants in the tribal state may be due to those living outside the tribal state having the desire to have more contact with the tribe, therefore being more willing to complete and return the survey. In

the open-ended questions, twenty percent of the participants located outside of the tribal state shared their desire to learn more about their tribe's culture and to live in the tribal state. Interestingly, no participants located in the tribal state mentioned a desire to know more about their tribal background, which may demonstrate the impact that location has on the ethnic exploration and satisfaction of the tribal adolescents' identity

There were no correlations found between tribal identity and self-esteem. This may be due to the self-esteem scale utilized. The Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale is a global measure of self-esteem, and ethnic identity is only one domain in the larger sense of self. Another measure of self-esteem should be explored for further research.

The survey was kept at a length that was deemed reasonable for a 13 to 17 year-old to complete. It may be beneficial to add more measures to provide a more detailed examination of adolescents' identity and experiences. However, it must always be weighed against the likelihood that a participant would be willing to take the time to complete it.

While the return rate was consistent with many mail-out surveys, the sample may appear relatively small (N=30). However, it must be stressed that the sample represents almost twenty percent of the entire population of the adolescents of this particular tribe. Furthermore, it is unclear whether those who chose to respond are in some ways different from those who did not. Future research should offer incentives to encourage participation.

The findings of this study should not be generalized to all American Indian adolescents. As Moran and Fleming (1999) state, there is a great deal of variation between many American Indian tribes in ethnic origin and cultural practices. Therefore, no study should try to collapse different tribes into one category of "American Indian."

There are many possible advantages and practical applications to this type of research. Adolescence can be a challenging period in one's life, and verbally discussing feelings may be difficult during this time; a survey might be a more comfortable way for adolescents to express personal feelings about their ethnic identity. By disseminating the results to participants, they may be reassured to know that other tribal youth feel similarly about their ethnic identity. Sharing the results of this study with the parents of these participants might be beneficial for their understanding of their tribal children; this information may aid them in knowing how to help their children grow in cultural awareness and tribal identification. The results of this study could also help tribal leaders initiate and/or improve programs targeted at tribal youth, since it is noted that a greater sense of ethnic identity relates to higher self-esteem, purpose in life, and self confidence (Martinez & Dukes, 1997).

There are three immediate directions that future research could take. First, other tribes could utilize the survey to attempt to examine the bicultural ethnic identity of their own tribal youth. Second, comparisons could also be made between adolescents living on or off reservation land. Third, bicultural ethnic identity could be studied through the life span. Both generational differences and developmental changes over time could be invaluable to our understanding of bicultural ethnic identity and its role in overall self-concept and psychological well-being.

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Footnotes

[1] The Council of Elders requested that the specific name of the tribe not be used in the manuscript. Therefore, the tribe will be generally referred to as a tribe from the Northeast.

[2] In the survey returned by the participants, the specific name of the tribe was inserted in the tribal and non-tribal identity statements.

Table 1:

Frequencies and Percentages: Tribal and Non-Tribal Activities

Activity	Percentage (n)
Tribal	
Pow-Wows	50.0% (15)
Tribal Crafts	26.7% (8)
Tribal Dance	26.7% (8)
Tribal Youth Group	26.7% (8)
Non-Tribal	
School Club(s)	63.3% (19)
Sports Team(s)	60.0% (18)
Church/Religious Groups	46.7% (14)
Dance	40.0% (12)
Music Lessons	40.0% (12)
Theater	33.3% (10)
School Band	20.0% (6)
Other (non-specified)	43.3% (13)

APPENDIX A: TRIBAL IDENTITY SCALE

1) I expect to be involved in _____ traditions as an adult. **(E)**

2) My _____ background is an important part of who I am. **(I)**

3) I am interested in learning more about my _____ culture. **(E)**

4) I feel a strong attachment towards my _____ background. **(I)**

5) I try to talk to others about being _____. **(E)**

6) I have a strong sense of belonging to my _____ background. **(I)**

7) I would enjoy participating in more _____ activities. **(E)**

8) I expect to be successful as an _____ adult. **(I)**

9) I am active in groups or clubs that include _____. **(E)**

10) I think about how my life will be affected by being an _____. **(I)**

(E) Indicates an exploration-related statement.

(I) Indicates an identification-related statement.

APPENDIX B: NON-TRIBAL IDENTITY SCALE

1) I expect to be involved in non-_____ traditions as an adult. **(E)**

2) My non-_____ background is an important part of who I am. **(I)**

3) I am interested in learning more about my non-_____ culture. **(E)**

4) I feel a strong attachment towards my non-_____ background. **(I)**

5) I try to talk to others about being non-_____. **(E)**

6) I have a strong sense of belonging to my non-_____ background. **(I)**

7) I would enjoy participating in more non-_____ activities. **(E)**

8) I expect to a successful non-_____ adult. **(I)**

9) I am active in groups or clubs that include non-_____. **(E)**

10) I think about how my life will be affected by being a non-_____. **(I)**

(E) Indicates an exploration-related statement.

(I) Indicates an identification-related statement.

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